

By the Kansas State Historical Society

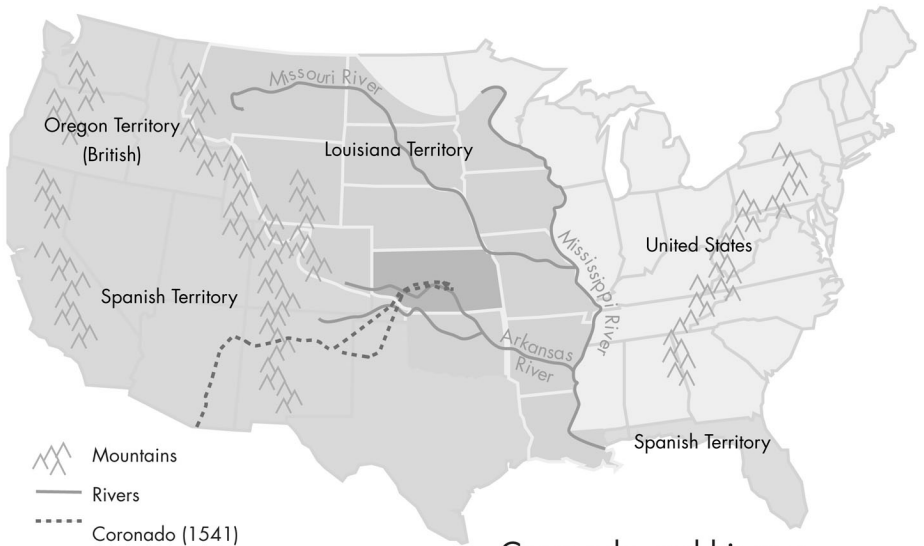
Coronado Explores Kansas

Francisco Vasquez de Coronado was an explorer. He was born in Spain. He lived from 1510 to 1554. Coronado was the first European to travel to the land that was to become Kansas.

Coronado first came to the New World when he was 25 years old. He traveled to the place called New Spain. Today this is Mexico.

Reason for Exploration

The King of Spain wanted to build a bigger empire. He also wanted more wealth. Explorers traveled north from New Spain searching for new lands to conquer. There were rumors of seven cities of gold.

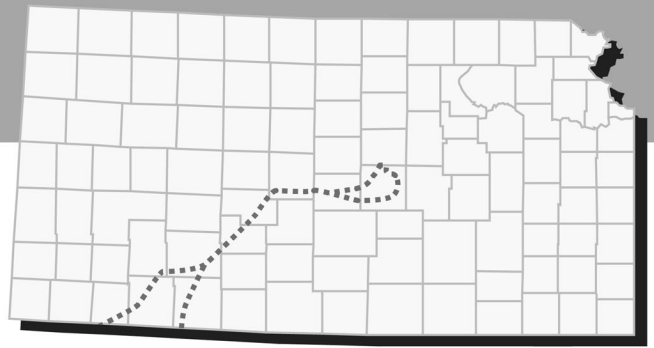


Coronado and his men traveled from Mexico to get to Kansas.



Coronado and his men.

Coronado's exploration route in Kansas.



Experiences and Observations

In July of 1540, Coronado began his expedition looking for the cities of gold. He arrived first in the area that today is the state of Arizona.

He met the Zuni Indians. Coronado found no gold in the Zuni pueblos.

Coronado sent out groups of soldiers to explore other regions. Some of his men explored the Grand Canyon.

Coronado led a group of soldiers to find the city of Quivira. He had heard people say that the streets of Quivira were paved with gold. It was during this journey that Coronado came to the land that today is Kansas. He came as far as the great bend of the Arkansas River.

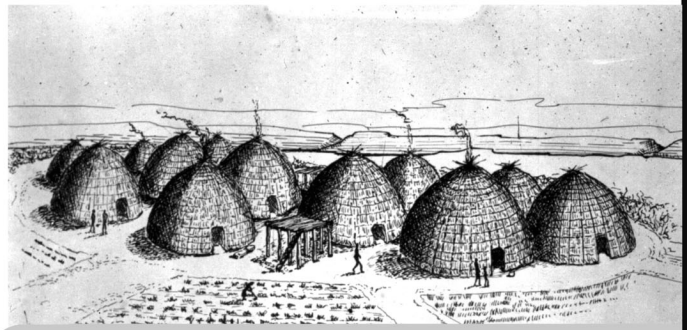
Coronado and his men wore suits of armor. These were made of chain mail. The soldiers wore them for protection. It was July and it was very hot. The soldiers would have been very uncomfortable.

Results of Exploration

In Kansas, Coronado did not find gold.

Instead he found Wichita villages.

The Wichita Indians lived in grass lodges.



A Wichita village in Kansas.

Coronado continued to travel looking for gold. He may have traveled as far north as present-day Salina. Coronado wrote about his journey. Today we can read his writings. Coronado wrote in Spanish. We also know where he went because pieces of Spanish chain mail have been found in central Kansas. Some soldiers left their chain mail armor behind.

Coronado never did find gold in the New World. His life became more difficult. After he returned to New Spain, he lost his job in the colonial government. There was a trial. He was found guilty of mistreating native people.



This piece of chain mail armor was found in central Kansas.